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STATE PLEASE PASS TO S/P AND S/GPI MARY KAREN WALKER

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [EINV](#) [EAID](#) [SCUL](#) [SMIG](#) [OIIP](#)
SUBJECT: EXPERIENCE ENGAGING DIASPORA COMMUNITIES

REF: STATE 86401

¶1. This cable provides input requested in reftel for the Secretary's Global Partnership Initiative.

¶2. Between the years of 1975-1985, approximately 130,000 Cambodian refugees were resettled in the United States after fleeing the Khmer Rouge regime. Since then, it is estimated that the number has grown to over half a million. Cambodian communities are concentrated in Long Beach, California, Lowell, Massachusetts, Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Seattle, Washington.

¶3. Given the relative newness of the Cambodian diaspora, there are few official connections between the diasporan community and the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC). The connections are mainly kinship in nature, and include some financial support in the form of remittances from family members living abroad. Due to the brutal circumstances of their escape and resettlement, many Cambodian Americans have had a difficult time adjusting to their new lives and face economic hardships. There is currently little long-term investment in Cambodia from the diaspora community as a result.

¶4. After years of conflict, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was set up from 1992-1993 in order to implement the Paris Peace Accords of 1991. UNTAC's many goals included the restoration of peace and execution of free and fair elections. Elections were held in 1993, and the new government proceeded to draft and approve a constitution. Given the shortage of educated Cambodians after the Khmer Rouge era, diasporans were encouraged to return to Cambodia to assume roles within the new government. Many Cambodian Americans are active within both the ruling and opposition parties.

¶5. As Cambodia continues to develop, cultural outreach is emerging. Last year, the rock opera "Where Elephants Weep," was brought from Lowell, MA and performed in Phnom Penh to sold-out crowds. The rock opera included performances from both native Cambodians and Cambodian Americans. The Ambassador will visit Cambodian American community leaders, professionals and students in Long Beach, CA in December at the invitation of the Cambodian Culture and Arts Association (CCAA). The CCAA is interested in partnering with the Embassy to "promote democracy, leverage economic growth, stimulate poverty reduction, eliminate corruption, and much more."

¶6. The Embassy regularly interacts with the Cambodian diaspora in the Long Beach area. The focus is primarily on promoting arts and educational exchanges between the community in California and their counterparts in Phnom Penh. The Embassy is also in contact with the Cambodian community in Silver Spring, MD in an effort to involve it in the installation and display of Angkorian bronze artifacts at the Sackler gallery in May of 2010.

¶7. The Embassy also engages the small Cambodian Cham Muslim diaspora communities in Olympia, WA and Santa Ana, CA. Embassy officers have met with the communities, visited worksites in the U.S., and participated in mosque openings and events in Cambodia funded by the diasporan Cham communities.

¶8. Point of contact for future reference and follow-up is PAO John E. Johnson at Johnsonje@state.gov.
RODLEY